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NSC BRIEFING Approved For Release 2000/08/29 : CIA-RDP79R00890A001200010001-2  
5 January 1960

### NEAR EAST

- I. Iraqi situation remains unstable, with many rumors that changes in the government will follow the legalization of political parties on 6 January.
- II. Under a new law on "societies and political groups," parties may begin to apply to the Interior Minister (currently anti-Communist Brigadier Yahyah).
- A. The law excludes from membership in political parties members of the armed forces, senior civil servants, and students.
- B. The pro-Communist, Colonel Mahdawi, has indicated that neither pro-Western nor pro-UAR parties will be permitted.
- C. The Communists still appear to be the best organized and disciplined group, with particular strength among the urban mob; their main competitor is the leftist National Democratic Party, which has four cabinet posts and has developed strength among the peasantry. The army remains a largely unknown quantity.
- III. We continue to receive reports of plotting to assassinate Qasim, but Nasir seems to be less hopeful than ever that anti-Communists friendly to him will be able to take the initiative soon in Iraq.
- IV. Meanwhile, Nasir continues to be plagued by problems in Syria.
- A. Last week, five Syrians, including UAR vice-President Hawrani, resigned from the government. All were members of the Baath Party, the socialist nationalist group, which was the leading Syrian force in the creation of the UAR two years ago and whose Iraqi branch has been one of the UAR's hopes for action against Qasim.

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- B. The immediate issue was the refusal of General Amir, Nasir's pro-consul in Syria, to allow the Baathists to enforce a land reform law in a manner intended to cripple some of their conservative political enemies in Syria.
- C. The basic issue, however, was probably over Nasir's unwillingness to allow the Baathists any substantial voice in overall UAR policy.
  - 1. Baathists have urged more active efforts to extend Arab unity; Nasir now realistically recognizes need to go slow.
- D. While the Baathists were unpopular in Syria and their resignations have been welcomed by other political elements there, their removal will not necessarily redound to Nasir's credit in Syria.
  - 1. His political and economic problems there, accentuated by the third year in a row of near drought and poor wheat crop, are still manifold, and the Egyptians feel they cannot control and do not fully trust Interior Minister Colonel Sarraj, who is the key to the maintenance of internal security in Syria.
- E. If an anti-Nasir regime ever becomes stabilized in Iraq, a discredited Nasir would find it increasingly difficult to maintain his hold on Syria.

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